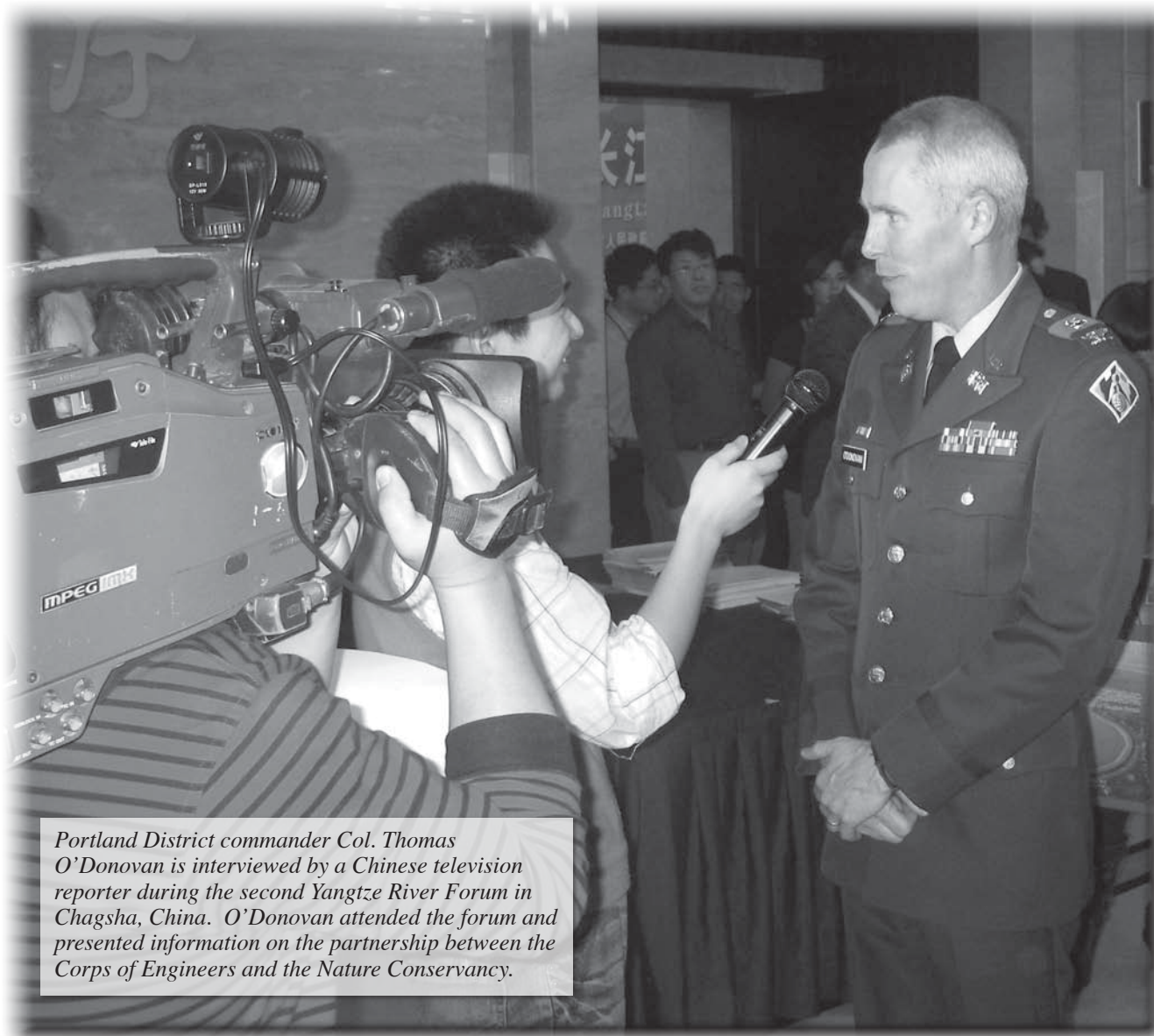




INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 4 Multi-generational communication skills
- 8 Shared Neutrals helps rebuild strong bonds
- 12 Bonneville spotlights new display



Portland District commander Col. Thomas O'Donovan is interviewed by a Chinese television reporter during the second Yangtze River Forum in Chagsha, China. O'Donovan attended the forum and presented information on the partnership between the Corps of Engineers and the Nature Conservancy.



COMMANDER'S COLUMN

Last month I had the opportunity to travel to China as the Deputy Head of Delegation for a team from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers attending the second Yangtze River Forum.

During this policy-level event, the Chinese government explored the environmental problems and impacts in detail that they are facing on the Yangtze River and the Dongting Lake (roughly the equivalent of the Mississippi, Missouri and Great Lakes system). Our delegation, partnered and funded by The Nature Conservancy, joined several hundred Chinese and international representatives to discuss the issues.

Following the conference, we traveled on the river for several days, which included a visit to the Three Gorges Dam. Throughout the conference and trip we observed and discussed the implications of what we saw with experts from around the world: from the local area, as well as from Australia to Zambezie, before returning to Beijing for the trip home.

The overall discussions were wide-ranging. They included concerns about the nearly complete Three Gorges Dam that were remarkably frank, for a Communist, one-party government. The dam is one of the largest ever built, with a truly huge hydropower capability: by itself, it can generate three times the power of Bonneville, John Day, The Dalles, The Willamette Valley and the Rogue projects, all added together.

However, without fish passage or temperature control as part of the project, the dam is already destroying fish stocks and impacting many species that count on those stocks, including humans; there are many other unanticipated or ignored impacts. Added to many other problems including industrial pollution and irrigation demands, the river as an ecosystem is in very serious trouble. (Any of this sound familiar?)

The forum concluded with the adoption of a "Changsha Declaration," which laid out



Col. Thomas O'Donovan

extensive efforts the government will undertake order to restore wetlands and improve flood damage reduction, including, for example, moving people out of the flood plain.

When an authoritarian government says that, it is significant. They moved 1.2 million people when they built the dam – the equivalent of half the population of Oregon. Just think about that for a minute. They built at least four new cities that we saw, each the size of Salem, and then told the people to move.

That's a brief overview of the conference. For those interested in learning more, I have posted my trip report on the Portland District intranet site.

What I saw, heard and learned has convinced me, more than ever, that the Corps is on the right track with our environmental principles. Having now seen the horrific results of what happened without such principles, I will continue striving to implement them at our level. Whether it is in complex areas such as our fish program and oil prevention programs, or in simple areas like my personal commitment to recycling paper in my own office, I have seen how effective these actions can be.

After seeing what an authoritarian government can do well and can do wrong on a scale I never

CORPS'PONDENT



US Army Corps of Engineers
Portland District

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imagined, I find renewed faith in our approach to democracy. Complex, cranky, occasionally capricious, inconsistent and easily criticized, it still remains far and away the best system for governing on the planet. Having now experienced some of those inconsistencies in our political system, I can see the challenges of our way of governing even more clearly. Nonetheless, it is clear to me how good it is, and that's the way I see it.

So, thanks very much for your support of our environmental principles at every level and for your continued service to the people of the United States. 

Essayons!



Photos from the top:
Second Yangtze Forum, Chagsha, China
Col. O'Donovan and Matt Rea at the forum and in Tiananmen Square
Model of the Three Gorges Dam
Col. O'Donovan stands at the Three Gorges Dam



COMMANDER'S COLUMN

Corps of Engineers Photos



Knowing multi-generational skills differ makes communication easier

By Erica Gann, Executive Office

Have you ever walked away from a conversation and wondered “Did they get it?” Or, worse yet, “Did I get it?” It could be due to the fact that some people just don’t communicate well; some of it could be due to generational differences and communication styles.

As of March 2007, 1095 employees work for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Portland District. As with all large organizations, employees generally fall into four distinct groups. It’s important to remember that while generalizations don’t fit every person, there are trends and basic characteristics about that have been shown to belong to these four groups: the Traditionalists, the Baby Boomers, the Gen Xers and the Gen Yers (or Nexters). Each group is diverse, with its own unique set of values and beliefs; understanding those behaviors helps develop methods to communicate successfully with each other. The largest group of employees is made up of the Baby Boomers and the Gen Xers, which has affected how communication occurs between offices and employees.

Based on characteristics identified by a Duke University study, 27 Portland District employees are Traditionalists. This group was born before 1944 and is considered the private and silent generation. Traditionalists are generally hardworking; formal organizational structure is important to them. Their style of dress tends to be more conservative and they are respectful of authority and institutional leadership. Building trust is very important to them.

Carol Job, an administrative officer for Engineering and Construction Division until April 30, belonged to this group. Job started with the Corps of Engineers early in the 1960s, three months after she graduated from high school. She quit working to raise her family, but returned to

NWP Generational Workforce

Traditionalist (1943 and Earlier):	27
Baby Boomer (1944-1960):	600
Generation X (1961-1976):	336
Nexter (1977 and Younger)	132

the Portland District when her children were older. Job worked her way up through the ranks from an entry-level clerk to the position from which she retired after 34 years of service.

Job embodies many of the traits found in her peer group. She’s formal, well-spoken, well-dressed and is very capable and organized. She’s been considered the “go-to” person in the District for years.

When asked about her preferred method of communication, Job favors direct communications, adding that “face-to-face interactions build trust and relationships.” Her preference tracks closely with the Traditionalist group’s view of trust issues. She is, however, a confirmed email user and uses the District’s intranet site to retrieve information, recognizing both as valuable sources of instant information many traditionalists have yet to embrace.

Carolyn Shivers, who has worked in the Logistics Management Office for four years, sits in her cubicle, but she won’t hear you stop at her desk. Notice the white cords connecting her ears to the iPod® device sitting on the desk. Carolyn belongs to the other minority group in the District: the Nexters.

Only 132 of the nearly 1100 District employees are Nexters – the Duke University study identified them as people born in, or after, 1977. Members of this generation have always lived in a world driven by high speed technology, whether it’s computers, video games, iPod® devices, cell phones, text messaging, debit cards or ATMs. These technologies

have always existed for Nexters, and that impacts how they communicate with their world.

Shivers joined the Corps as a Logistics Management intern in Washington, D.C. After her internship she accepted a position with Portland District as a logistics management specialist. She also has served as the District's transportation officer for the past two years while continuing her education at Reed College, where she will graduate this month with a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies.

Shivers, like her Nexter peers, thrives on positive reinforcement and is motivated to action by on-the-spot feedback. She's engaged in learning – how she learns is as important to her as what she learns. Learning is a lifelong priority for Nexters. They will investigate everything and leaders should expect them to question assumptions that have, up until now, created the corporate culture. Another characteristic is independence; once she learns a new task, Shivers looks for independence to accomplish her job without a lot of supervision. Most Nexters enjoy continual challenges and Shivers agrees. "I want challenges to solve and interesting puzzles to work through," she said.

Shivers also prefers email communication when providing and receiving information. She's a regular user of the District's intranet site, providing travel policy and how-to guidance to users across the agency. She is comfortable using whatever

electronic tools are available and regularly submits information to the District's *First Edition* and *Newsbreak* publications.

These two groups, the Traditionalists and the Nexters, are in the minority: 159 people out of 1095. The last of the 27 Traditionalists will retire within the next few years, taking valuable historical knowledge and experience. Many of these employees are surprised at how much the workplace has changed during their careers. "The biggest difference for me is how fast information is transmitted," Job said. Although she assures her Nexter colleagues that they really did have phones when she started working, document processing has seen the quickest change. "When we had a high-priority action, we had to hand-carry it to every office personally. There was no scanning, no email, and for a long time, no photocopying. Each document was an original or a true carbon copy," she said.

Shivers may not be able to imagine a world without email, but hand-carrying an important document still happens from time to time. It just might be harder to get Shivers' attention as she hand-carries a document. Her iPod® is mobile, after all.



Next month ... Baby Boomers and Gen Xer's



Multigenerational Workforce

Traditionalists

- Experienced or influenced by two wars and the Great Depression.
- Believe more in the value of work than finding personal meaning in one's work.
- Value sacrificing for the common good and loyalty to the organization more than the needs of the individual. Have definite views about respecting authority.

Nexters (Gen. Y)

- First generation to be born into homes with computers-digital era.
- Know more about technology than their parents.
- Because of the advances in technology and the enormity of conveniences, this generation is flooded with choices.
- Sometimes these conveniences and multiple choices/options creates problems for the Nexter.
- Choices and decisions are at times made without the benefit of wisdom and skills to support the decision.

Source: Duke University, Personal Assistance Service, <http://www.hr.duke.edu/eohs/pas/multigenerational2.html>



MEMO

MAY



Photos from top left, counter clockwise

Korean War Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Iraqi Freedom memorial ceremony, Brassfield-Mora, Iraq

U.S. Marine Corps Iwo Jima Memorial, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Navy Memorial, Washington, D.C.

World War II USS Arizona Memorial, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii

Vietnam Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Korean War Veterans Memorial wall, Washington, D.C.

Center photo - National World War II Memorial,
Washington, D.C.



MEMORIAL DAY

May 28, 2007



DoD Photos



Command Climate Survey

They asked ... are they listening?

By Matt Rabe, Public Affairs Office

Job satisfaction is an important factor in taking care of people. So important, in fact, that the Army goes to great lengths to measure it and find ways to improve it.

The Army surveys its workforce on a seemingly continual basis: Army-wide, Corps-wide and even District-wide.

Last December, employees across the Corps were asked to participate in a command climate survey. More than 50 percent of the Portland District workforce took the time to respond to the survey, providing management with a lot of data and comments to work through.

Portland District Commander Col. Thomas O'Donovan talks often about the results of the survey. He keeps a copy of it on the corner of his desk. On several occasions he and I have traded ideas on how to address some of the communication concerns, as well as the general wellbeing of the District workforce.

"I'm still digesting what the employees told me," said O'Donovan. "I was very pleased with the level of response and the quality of the information we received. The really important point is that we found our people had a more positive response than the rest of the Corps in 38 of 40 areas surveyed.

"That says a lot about us as a District."

On the other hand, the responses are sometimes conflicting. While 90 percent of respondents like what they do, only 77 percent are proud to be part of the organization. Likewise, 84 percent believe their supervisor cares about them and treats them with respect, but only 76 percent trust their immediate supervisor.

The perennial low mark on the survey details how well employees believe managers deal with poor performers. Only 40 percent believe managers

are effective in this area; that mirrored the results of the climate survey in 2002. District employees still have a slightly brighter outlook than the rest of the respondents: government-wide, that response was 29 percent in a 2006 survey.

Although O'Donovan understands the source and history of this perception, "I find it disappointing that this perception continues year after year," he said. "The reality is there are corrective actions taking place behind the scenes - where they belong."

He is referring, of course, to the privacy rules that protect employees from having their disciplinary actions revealed to others. "About 10 percent of the open comments (in the survey) dealt with very specific concerns about specific people," O'Donovan said. "We are actively resolving those issues."

But he also cautions employees to not measure others' performance using their own standards. Employees have individualized performance standards based on their specific job and position in the organization.

O'Donovan felt so strongly about addressing this employee concern that he took the problem to the future leadership of the District, specifically the Leadership Development Program.

"The capstone project for this year's LDP group is to look at the issue of non-performing employees and leader disregard of that poor performance," he said. "I am not saying there is a systemic problem, but this same issue comes up constantly. We need to get serious about looking into it and determining if there is in fact a problem, and if so, fixing it."

O'Donovan concedes that more can be done to improve how the District's leaders deal with poor performers and unacceptable behavior.

"Make no mistake, we have an excellent group of supervisors in Portland District," he said. "But



just like anywhere else, there appears to be some discomfort in dealing with conflict and uncomfortable conversations.”

Improving supervisor training is a good thing. Currently, the District has no formal program to prepare supervisors for the critical role they assume in managing the actions (and expectations) of others.

O'Donovan is trying to pull back the veil separating employees and the leadership

Considering the ever-increasing operations tempo and the seemingly decreasing budget and staffing, managing employees in this dynamic and stressful environment is likely the most important task any supervisor has.

Efforts are being made in other areas, too. Communication challenges and welfare issues were noted throughout the survey.

Whether it dealt with how well the commander communicates his vision and goals (71 percent thought he did well), the effectiveness of internal communications (49 percent found them effective), or employees feeling that their opinions count (61 percent feel they do), our communication strategies clearly needed some attention – and now it is getting some.

O'Donovan is trying to pull back the veil separating employees and the leadership. He wants more employees to better understand how corporate decisions are made and how those decisions fit within the organization's missions and goals, as well as within his five Focus Areas for Success.

Here are a few examples. Employees are invited to sit in on Corporate Team meetings (and a few have),


the minutes are posted on the intranet and there is a greater emphasis on getting information out to every employee by multiple methods. Additionally, the commander's open door policy is getting renewed attention.

Even the proliferation of all-employee emails was addressed (both in the survey and by the commander). Instead of numerous all-employee emails crowding employees' inboxes each day, the *First Edition* was developed to take care of the emails needing wide distribution in a once-a-day fashion.

Also, many Robert Duncan Plaza employees expressed frustration that the third floor cafeteria remained closed. O'Donovan saw that as an easy fix and pushed the Logistics Management Office, the General Services Administration and the building manager to reopen the facility. While the full-service cafeteria is gone, the room is now open and offers a variety of pre-packaged or prepared items, as well as hot and cold beverages, from vending machines.

A perfectly motivated workforce is an elusive thing. There will always be areas needing improvement, and areas where we exceed expectations.

As one survey respondent wrote: “I believe we do a lot of things very well, but we could always do some things better. We should strive for continual improvements throughout the organization.”

I look at the survey results as both a team leader and an employee. As a team leader, I see actual steps being taken to help me become a better supervisor; as an employee, I am encouraged by the leadership's actions, which demonstrate their dedication to addressing the data and comments for the improvement of the organization. 

Question	Portland District 2006	Government-wide 2006
I like the work I do	90%	67%
I am proud to be part of this organization	77%	56%
Senior leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce	77%	38%
I have trust and confidence in my immediate supervisor	76%	64%
I have the resources necessary to do my job	56%	48%





Shared Neutrals helps offices rebuild strong bonds

By Jennifer Sowell, Public Affairs Office

Every office has its share of interpersonal turmoil. Even the most harmonious groups experience discord from time to time. Disagreements can lead to conflict, and if left unchecked, can turn the workplace into a miserable environment. Conflicts that go unresolved can result in increased stress, lack of trust, and damaged morale, all of which can lead to a decline in productivity that affects the entire office.

People often consider talking with the Equal Employment Opportunity Office or the union to take care of such situations, but there are other options available.

“Using a form of alternative dispute resolution is a viable alternative,” said LaMar Williams, Portland District’s Equal Employment officer.

Alternative dispute resolution includes facilitation and mediation, which try to help participants collaborate to settle their differences.

“More formal methods don’t always result in the best outcome for everyone involved, especially when it comes to interpersonal issues,” said Marci Cook, environmental protection specialist and

Shared Neutrals facilitator. “Those can usually be resolved through mediation instead.”

Mediation is a form of alternative dispute resolution that uses an informal, but structured conversation; it allows people who are embroiled in conflict to discuss their issues with each other in the presence of trained mediators.

When participants are unable to work together and have interpersonal conflicts and poor communication mediation can be an extremely effective tool, said Cook.

In addition to her Portland District designation, Cook is a mediator and Corps liaison to Shared Neutrals, a mediation group run by the Oregon Federal Executive Board. The group consists of mediators from federal, state and local agencies in Oregon and Southwest Washington that work to resolve disputes referred from member agencies.

“Shared Neutrals offers fully trained, competent mediators who handle everything from conflicts between two people, to supervisor-employee issues to team building,” said Cook.

The program does not provide mediation or facilitation for cases involving serious or criminal misconduct, disputed union contracts, or cases expected to require more than 35 hours.

Each Shared Neutrals mediator must complete training that satisfies Oregon Dispute Resolution Commission standards.

Shared Neutrals uses a confidential process in which impartial mediators help participants by facilitating conversation, helping to clarify issues and getting the parties to see each other’s point of view, all of which ultimately guides them to resolving their conflicts. Mediators serve on cases for agencies other than their own to provide an added degree of neutrality and confidentiality.

The process is absolutely voluntary and provides a safe environment for people to talk through their



Marci Cook is a Shared Neutrals facilitator and the Portland District’s liaison

issues, interests and feelings, said Cook. Mediation allows people to come together to get their issues out on the table, talk them through and decide on the outcome for themselves.

"I believe in the collaborative process, where confidentiality and a voluntary process are critical components," said Cook. "I'm a huge advocate of that system."

Mediation is most useful when applied before conflicts spiral completely out of control. Offices or individuals experiencing conflict beyond their capacity to resolve can request mediation through Shared Neutrals by contacting their agency's liaison to start a case file.

The agency liaison, who in the Corps' case is Cook, gathers information about the dispute. All parties can then make an informed decision about whether to mediate through the program or to pursue other options; the agency liaison can decide if the case is appropriate. Participating agencies contribute a little and gain access to a lot.

Where outside mediation can cost hundreds of dollars per hour, agencies that take part in Shared Neutrals agree to contribute meeting space and mediators in exchange for their training and services, said Cook. "The program is a huge benefit and service to the District," she said.

Out of about 40 cases Cook has mediated, only one has not been resolved through this process.

The opportunity to be heard and to hear another's perspective can help clarify issues, provide insight into interpersonal dynamics and allow recognition of options. "The parties own the process. The mediators just help them move in a positive direction," she said.

"Helping to rebuild relationships and trust is really satisfying, but also very exhausting," said Cook. "It's very humbling to know you've helped people get to a better place and feel better about themselves and about coming to work."

Conflicts between colleagues can include personality differences, ambiguous roles and expectations, conflicting communication styles and misunderstandings. According to Shared Neutrals, mediation gets parties to cooperate in creating win-win solutions. When using formal methods, someone outside the situation decides an outcome in which one party typically feels he or she has lost. Formal methods can also be adversarial, which can damage relationships even further. Mediation builds relationships by getting the parties together to talk through their issues and reach workable solutions.



In Memoriam

Alma Chapman, 81, died March 18, 2007, of age-related causes. Chapman worked as a secretary for the Army Corps of Engineers at Lookout Dam for 25 years. She is survived by two sisters and four brothers.

Milton Taxer, 91, died April 12, 2007 of Alzheimer's disease. Before he began working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1939, he was a Navy Seabee during World War II. After the war, Taxer began his career with the Corps, which lasted more than 40 years until his retirement in 1979. A civil engineer, Taxer was recognized for his outstanding work on Powerhouse 2 at Bonneville Lock and Dam and for his designs for the Green Peter and Lost Creek projects. Taxer is survived by his wife of 58 years, Mildred, three sons and two grandchildren. A memorial service is planned for July; remembrances may be made to the Alzheimer's Association.

Judy Paxton died April 21, 2007. She was 66. Paxton retired from the Corps of Engineers in 1996 with 36 years of service in human resources. Friends and colleagues remember her organizing many social activities and banquets for the Corps bowling league and other groups. She is predeceased by her husband, James, who also retired from the Corps and is survived by her daughter Shelly. Donations in her memory may be made to the Clackamas Women's Service.



Bonneville spotlights new display of old equipment


by Bonneville Lock and Dam Ranger Staff

What do you do with old, outdated equipment that is no longer used? It is usually put into storage, just in case it might be needed again. That's what happened to some electrical test equipment from the 1940s and 1950s at Bonneville Lock and Dam. Now, nearly 60 years later, the question became "What should we do with this equipment now?" Clearly it would not be needed again - technology has changed drastically since Bonneville was constructed. What used to take a heavy piece of equipment to accomplish can now be done by a small computer chip.

Jim Price, a retired engineer and volunteer at the Bradford Island Visitor Center at Bonneville Lock and Dam, stepped in. Price was fascinated when he heard about this equipment and wanted to see it for himself. He contacted the Corps Special Projects Coordinator to get accurate details on each piece of equipment and pitched an idea to Supervisory Park Ranger, Pat Barry: create a display at the visitor center for the old equipment. "I just couldn't let this equipment get surplused and end up who knows where," Price said.

Barry liked the idea and told Price to pursue it. "I thought it would be a great addition to the historic Powerhouse 1 Display Gallery," he said.

Being an engineer, Price wrote up descriptions for each piece of equipment, including technical descriptions. Being a resource interpreter, Barry could improve the descriptions so non-engineer visitors could relate to and understand them.

"We are very pleased at the way this display turned out. Jim did an exceptional job", Barry said. Now when Price takes visitors to the Powerhouse 1 Display Gallery, he has the satisfaction of knowing visitors enjoy something that flowed from his passion for engineering, like electricity through test equipment. 



Jim Price, Bonneville Lock and Dam Visitor Center volunteer, stands in front of the display case he helped design containing vintage electrical test equipment. The display is located in the Powerhouse 1 Display Gallery at Bonneville Lock and Dam.

Corps of Engineers Photo